United Nations A/C.2/58/SR.13

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
31 October 2003

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 October 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Raubenheimer (Vice-Chairman) ..... (South Africa)
later: Ms. Zubčević (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Croatia)

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03-55411 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. Raubenheimer (South Africa), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (A/58/25 and A/58/204)

(a) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/58/164)

(b) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/58/158)

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/58/191)

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Introduction and general discussion

1. **Mr. Lorenzo** (Mexico) said that his Government's new approach to the challenge posed by natural disasters emphasized prevention, albeit without neglecting the importance of mitigating the effect of natural disasters. The new strategy pursued the following goals: to promote the sharing of responsibility and participation by the public and private sectors and civil society; to identify and disseminate information about the risks faced by communities; to strengthen applied research on technologies for mitigating risk; and to create a culture of self-protection. Given the importance of regional cooperation for disaster reduction, Mexico was participating actively in the work of a number of specialized regional mechanisms that were addressing the problem. Mexico endorsed the United Nations approach of giving priority to prevention.

2. **Ms. Zubčević** (Croatia), noting that her country was a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that there was a need for greater cooperation and complementarity in activities relating to those conventions, particularly at the national level. Her delegation welcomed the endorsement by the General Assembly of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and its call for further action to ensure that the Programme was fully integrated into the mainstream of United Nations efforts aimed at attaining sustainable development. Croatia had great potential for producing energy from different renewable resources but, like many other countries in transition, it was faced with economic, legislative, development, financial, institutional, organizational and technical problems. Her delegation therefore welcomed the involvement of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in tackling those issues. Croatia had submitted renewable resource projects for application under the GEF-PDF-B Fund. It also welcomed a grant and a loan provided by the World Bank in the amount of $14 million for energy efficiency in Croatia, primarily for services and households.

3. Croatia endorsed the Delhi Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change and Sustainable Development adopted in November 2002. It was keen to play an active part in international efforts aimed at finding practical solutions to problems created by climate change. In that regard, her country was undertaking measures to introduce a cleaner production strategy in its national economy, primarily through corporate responsibility. In particular, permanent monitoring of air quality had been established through the Air Quality Protection Act. Croatia was also a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol. Once the Protocol entered into force and was ratified by Parliament, Croatia would commit itself to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by 5 per cent in relation to the base year, over the commitment period 2008 to 2012. Croatia had issued its first national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and welcomed the adoption of new guidelines for the preparation of second national communications.

4. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had clearly established the linkage between the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In January 2003, Croatia had commenced development of its national biosafety framework as part of the UNEP-GEF global project on the development of national biosafety frameworks. The

main objective of the project was to prepare Croatia for implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The total cost of the project was US$ 205,300, of which $136,800 were provided by GEF and the remainder by the Government of Croatia ($68,500).

5. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was an important tool for combating poverty. Croatia welcomed the increased synergies between it and the conventions on climate change and biological diversity. There should be a stronger focus on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). Within the context of the European region, Croatia supported strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Disaster Reduction.

6. Croatia had actively participated in the International Year of Mountains 2002 and was one of the 16 European countries that had established a national committee for the observance of the Year of Mountains, which should serve as a catalyst for long-term, concrete action for sustainable mountain development. Furthermore, there was a need for concerted synergistic implementation of the sustainable development framework, as provided for in Rio and Johannesburg, in order to ensure the attainment of international development goals, most notably those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

7. *Ms. Zubčević (Croatia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

8. **Mr. Muchemi** (Kenya) said that implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was crucial in reversing the current rate of biodiversity loss. Kenya, like other developing countries, had formulated a national biodiversity strategy and action plan, but its implementation had been constrained by the lack of resources. His delegation called on the international community to assist developing countries in carrying out their action plans. It was important to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources as agreed upon at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

9. The world community must help the poor economies develop their energy resources and services. Mobilization of adequate financial resources, enhanced capacity-building, promotion of partnership, transfer of appropriate technologies to developing countries and awareness creation were prerequisites for ensuring provision of affordable energy services. Kenya was currently preparing a national energy policy and strategy paper to address the issue of energy in relation to sustainable development. His delegation urged the international community to continue supporting the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in efforts to implement the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and the Global Renewable Energy Education and Training (GREET) programme, particularly in Africa.

10. It was essential to formulate strategies for early warning systems, disaster preparedness and monitoring. His delegation called for a strengthened role of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) through provision of adequate resources to the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction. Disaster reduction efforts should be enhanced through the strengthening of national capacities, awareness creation, exchange of information and provision of additional financial resources.

11. The establishment of the Drought Monitoring Centre in Nairobi had greatly assisted various countries in the Horn of Africa in climate monitoring, prediction and early warning. His delegation hoped that the international community would provide the necessary assistance to the Centre to enable it to discharge its mandate effectively. The implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was crucial to addressing the challenges of desertification. Developing countries that were parties to the Convention had formulated national, subregional and regional action programmes to combat desertification. However, lack of resources and capacity at all levels had continued to constrain their successful implementation. The sessions of the Conference of the Parties to UNCCD and its subsidiary bodies should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. His delegation welcomed the decision by the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to designate land degradation as one of its focal areas and to designate the Facility as a financial mechanism for the Convention. It also welcomed the recent relocation of the United Nations Development Programme's Drylands Development Centre to Nairobi.

12. All Member States must work in a cooperative manner to achieve the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Kenya was currently carrying out national programmes aimed at mitigating the effect of climate change. National

guidelines on activities implemented jointly under the Convention, including a Cleaner Development Mechanism (CDM) had been developed. His delegation called for enhanced support to developing countries to enable them to achieve the goals of the Convention.

13. An effective institutional framework at all levels was crucial to the full implementation of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It was important to enhance the role of the institutions and organizations concerned with environment and sustainable development, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

14. **Mr. Hjálmarsson** (Iceland) said that the production of electricity through fossil fuels took an enormous toll on the environment and did not provide a lasting solution. Iceland was fortunate in having rich resources of clean renewable energy and was the only country in the Western world to produce 100 per cent of its electricity by renewable means, mainly by hydroelectricity. Electrical production in Iceland was totally carbon free. Some of the country's electricity was also obtained from geothermal sources. Indeed, 72 per cent of total energy needs were currently provided from renewable sources. The remaining 28 per cent of all primary energy used in Iceland was provided by hydrocarbons.

15. Further steps could nevertheless be taken to utilize the country's sustainable energy resources. For many years it had been the policy of the Government of Iceland to increase the use of renewable energy resources by offering Iceland as a site for power-intensive industries, thus decreasing the global pollution caused by energy production in other countries. Furthermore, Iceland had been looking for means to utilize its clean energy resources for powering vehicles and ships. In 1999, the Government had stated its intention to progress towards a sustainable hydrogen society. As a result of that policy, three hydrogen fuel cell buses were already operating in Reykjavik as part of the Ecological City Transport System Project (ECTOS), supported by the European Commission. Other parallel cooperation projects had already been initiated with a view to developing and introducing hydrogen as a fuel for ships and exploring possibilities for exporting it. A pioneering company, Icelandic New Energy, had been established in partnership with major international corporations that were using Iceland as an experimental ground for new technology in the field of hydrogen. The University of Iceland and Icelandic New Energy had received dozens of delegations from all over the world and were building up a network of contacts.

16. Cooperation with other countries and international corporations was needed to develop essential technology and applications. It was necessary to build up an international consensus for eco-friendly energy solutions to accelerate technical innovations and lower production costs. Therefore, Iceland's commitment to developing sustainable energy resources and its long-term interest in developing a hydrogen economy should be viewed in an international perspective. Iceland's transition to a hydrogen economy would not happen in isolation from the world at large. His country was looking forward to participating in the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy (IPHE) to be inaugurated in Washington in November at the initiative of the United States. The development of sustainable and non-polluting primary sources of energy would be a key element in the attainment of the goals set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The introduction of hydrogen as an energy carrier was an important step in extending the use of such energy sources.

17. **Mr. Kazemi-Kamyab** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the agenda of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should focus on implementation and capacity-building rather than on development of new policies, frameworks or concepts. On the question of new and renewable sources of energy, he said that the World Solar Programme should be strengthened and expanded in various countries where climatic conditions were favourable. The discussion on implementation of the conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be pursued in the appropriate forum, namely the second cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Second Committee should avoid entering into substantive debate.

18. The decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held recently in Havana, represented a further step towards recognition of desertification as a global threat. His delegation welcomed the designation of GEF as the financial mechanism for UNCCD. The next step should be to bring financing into line with policy planning on desertification. That could be done by enhancing the

role of the Conference of the Parties as the leading policy planning entity in the area of land degradation and desertification, to provide guidance to GEF. His delegation supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to provide funds for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies from the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

19. His delegation generally supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/58/191), in particular regarding the need to negotiate an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and to reiterate the invitation to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to take appropriate steps in that regard. There should be continued cooperation among the different conventions relating to biodiversity. The recent entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was another important development, which should further promote the equitable sharing of the benefits of biotechnology and the preservation of genetic resources.

20. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) (A/58/277), he said that his delegation fully supported the comprehensive implementation of all components of disaster management. It was to be hoped that the Second International Conference on Early Warning would highlight more than before the importance of early warning, pave the way for monitoring disaster reduction and provide for effective measures to assist developing countries in managing natural disasters. With regard to paragraph 59 of the report, special attention should be paid to the many complexities and uncertainties involved in the link between natural disaster and climate change. His delegation looked forward to participating in the upcoming session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

21. His delegation shared the views expressed in the report on the International Year of Mountains (A/58/134), on the need to continue the promotion of sustainable development in mountain areas beyond the Year. He supported the recommendations on advancing the objectives of the Year through various measures, such as strengthening of inter-agency collaboration, establishment of national committees and exchange of information. However, there might be some difficulties involved in exchanging information on transboundary mountain ranges. Moreover, developing countries would need international technical and technological support.

22. **Mr. Smaili** (Algeria) said that the struggle against desertification was one of the priority objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The fight against desertification and drought was beyond the capacity of any single country. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was an appropriate instrument for promoting sustainable development and eradicating poverty. Unless the problem of desertification and drought was addressed, it would be impossible to attain the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals agreed at various United Nations summits and conferences. The international community must assist with financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer in order to help the developing countries in that regard. The decision to make GEF a financing mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification was a step in the right direction. However, it was important to increase funding for GEF and to find other sources of financing, both multilateral and bilateral, for implementation of the Convention. Declaring 2004 as the international year of deserts and desertification would be an appropriate and timely step, as it would raise awareness and mobilize international public opinion about the challenge which desertification posed to the entire planet.

23. **Ms. von Lilien-Waldau** (International Fund for Agricultural Development), speaking on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), said that the sixth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties had endorsed the operational strategy of the Global Mechanism to act as a broker between supply and demand and the need for a multifaceted approach to implementing that sustainable development convention. The Conference had requested the Global Mechanism to strengthen the supply side of its operations and its collaboration with the Facilitation Committee in order to ensure programmatic convergence, and the Committee had been called upon in turn to enhance its support of the Global Mechanism and the UNCCD objectives. The Global Mechanism and the Facilitation Committee had

then produced a business plan for 2004-2006 which specified targets for the Global Mechanism and committed the Facilitation Committee to take on greater responsibility for the implementation of the Convention.

24. Resource-mobilization and partnership-building were becoming the focus of the Global Mechanism's work, and the Facilitation Committee had increased its institutional commitment to support UNCCD implementation. IFAD itself had already enhanced its implementation support: over the past 25 years, nearly 50 per cent of its projects had included components to combat land degradation in developing countries and it was currently providing $75 million a year to support land and water management programmes. But IFAD had pledged to do more: it was exploring how to integrate the Global Mechanism more systematically in its field operations, policy development and advocacy; and an advisory group on collaboration with the Global Mechanism was to be established. IFAD had been encouraged by the general view at the Conference of the Parties that UNCCD was as much a development as an environment agreement: campaigns against poverty, hunger and environmental degradation were not competing interests but mutually reinforcing processes; for poorer people in rural areas, sustainable natural-resource management and social and economic development were part of one common agenda.

25. National Governments and the development community could not deliver development for poor people; instead, their responsibility was to identify partnerships and mobilize resources to increase the capacity of the rural poor. If the rural poor could be provided with the tools for prosperity, there would be a significant reduction of poverty. Both the Global Mechanism and IFAD were committed to working with all their partners for the achievement of the UNCCD goals.

26. **Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that the developing countries must be helped to meet their rising energy demands on a sustainable basis. Renewable energy sources, for example, would become affordable in developing countries only if developed countries increased their use of such sources. UNIDO was therefore looking forward to the International Conference for Renewable Energy in 2004 and was developing an investment model for building up the developing countries' capacity to manufacture renewable-energy equipment.

27. UNIDO had formulated comprehensive energy projects for rural areas of developing countries, and its energy programmes focused on various sources of renewable energy. Its Initiative on Rural Energy for Productive Use provided services in technical cooperation and project/programme design, capacity development and technology transfer, productive energy use, and financing mechanisms.

28. UNIDO regarded support for the UNFCCC negotiating process and the promotion of the Kyoto Protocol as high priorities; the objective was to accelerate the deployment of climate-friendly industrial technology. It was optimistic about the prospects for investment in greenhouse-gas abatement in developing countries under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and was providing assistance with methodological and institutional issues relating to project identification and development, transfer of technology and information, capacity-building and training, and advice on the needs of the parties to UNFCCC and the operational programmes of GEF.

29. UNIDO had formed public-private partnerships in many developing countries and had supported the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, establishing 10 national ozone units between 1993 and 2002. Capacity-building needs for the development of industrial CDM projects had been identified in Africa and Asia, and UNIDO had acquired a comprehensive picture of where it should concentrate its assistance in that area. It was currently holding meetings on technology transfer, industrial-energy efficiency and carbon financing in cooperation with the Austrian Government and the Climate Technology Initiative. UNIDO played an important role in delivering sustainable industrial growth based on environment-friendly technologies; it would continue to pursue its objectives of achieving sustainable development while preserving the environment.

30. **Mr. Al-Alawi** (Oman) said that only concerted efforts by the developed and developing countries would resolve the complex and interrelated environmental problems suffered by the latter. Swift action to ensure that those problems grew no worse was a shared responsibility, since the harmful effects of environmental pollution affected all countries, as illustrated by examples such as the ozone hole, global

warming and the shortage of drinking water. He therefore urged the developed countries to provide the finance and technology needed to help the developing countries tackle such challenges before the task became more onerous. The great importance which Oman attached to environmental issues was signalled by its commitment to the signature of all relevant conventions and to the principles adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which provided the scientific framework for the global partnership and communal responsibility relating to the environment and the protection of natural resources in the interest of sustainable development.

31. Oman had also acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which it believed to be an effective tool. The efforts to prevent worsening of the desertification problem, however, would be incomplete without concrete international support and expertise provided by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and donor States. Established in 1989 and awarded by UNESCO, the biennial Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation offered further evidence of Oman's concern for the global environment. In Oman itself, Omani Environment Day was celebrated in January each year as an awareness-raising exercise. In conclusion, he commended the assistance provided to the developing countries in matters of training, scientific research, technology transfer and legislative drafting in connection with environmental protection and called on all States and relevant organizations to become involved in the important partnership to that end.

32. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the growing problem of desertification and drought remained a major obstacle to Africa's development and contributed to the impoverishment of its peoples. SADC supported the view that combating desertification was an important means of eradicating poverty and it welcomed the outcome of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties. It also welcomed the Conference's decision to make GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention and urged the two secretariats to expedite the memorandum of understanding.

33. Everyone had a responsibility to support and ensure sufficient resources for implementation of UNCCD. The Johannesburg Summit had recognized that the convention was an essential tool for addressing poverty eradication; its implementation would make an immense contribution to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. SADC had itself taken notable strides in promoting the UNCCD ideals, in particular by designating the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre in Namibia as the SADC centre of excellence for training its citizens to combat desertification. It called on the international community to support the formulation of the national action programmes of the SADC countries and such undertakings as the NEPAD Environment Initiative and to design a concrete mechanism to address all aspects of drought and desertification.

34. SADC supported the designation of 2004 as the international year of deserts and desertification and reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of UNCCD.

35. **Mr. Rim** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, despite the reaffirmation of the international commitment to Agenda 21 at the Johannesburg Summit, 2.5 billion people still had no access to safe drinking water or adequate sanitation, and attempts to restrain the development of the developing countries persisted. Sustainable development was not a monopoly of one side, and the most urgent issue for the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation was to create a political environment favourable to sustainable development in the developing countries. Genuine international cooperation in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter was vital; the imposition of values and conditions on development was a challenge to international relations, which should be based on equality of sovereignty.

36. The developed countries would have to provide the developing countries with financial and technical assistance on preferential terms and take steps to relieve or eliminate the debt burden. Encroachments on the sovereignty and the right to development of other countries by imposition of sanctions and blockades should be terminated immediately. It was essential to respect the authority and strengthen the role of the United Nations system in tackling the challenges of sustainable development, with priority given to water supply, sanitation and human settlements.

37. His Government attached priority to environmental protection and had made considerable efforts over the past year in such areas as tree planting, housing construction, and redirection of rivers, including the completion of a waterway project with financial support from the OPEC Fund. It would continue to work with the international community to achieve the goals set in Johannesburg through the effective use of its domestic resources and sustainable economic activities.

38. **Mr. Jose** (India) said that the Johannesburg Summit had highlighted the need to integrate the objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity into global, regional and national programmes and policies and had made a commitment to reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010, a goal included in the strategic plan adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. As one of the 12 mega-biodiversity countries, India had introduced a series of measures for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. International cooperation was needed to strengthen the monitoring of biopiracy and ensure the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of biological and genetic resources. The decision of the Johannesburg Summit to negotiate an international regime to that end was therefore welcome.

39. India was in favour of an effective system for the protection of biodiversity and the associated traditional knowledge. The system for the protection of intellectual property rights should not displace the developing countries as competitors and transform them into mere suppliers of raw materials, and the patenting of biological resources must not restrict their access to their own biological resources. India had ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and hoped that it would enable States parties to protect their biodiversity against the risks posed by modified organisms.

40. India had always argued for strengthening global cooperation to address environmental problems. It had ratified UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol and called on other countries to do likewise. Progress towards the entry into force of the Protocol was essential if further steps for the implementation of the Convention were to be considered during the second commitment period. The Johannesburg Summit had recognized that climate-change issues were a common concern for humankind and for sustainable development. India had hosted the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, which had addressed the Johannesburg mandate in concrete ways, including the adoption of the New Delhi five-year work programme and the Ministerial Declaration establishing the link between climate change and sustainable development. India was deeply committed to sustainable development and had one of the world's most active renewable-energy programmes, promoting various energy efficiency measures in a number of sectors.

41. India attached considerable importance to UNCCD and welcomed the GEF decision to include land degradation as a focal area and to designate GEF as a financial mechanism for UNCCD; it also welcomed the conclusions reached at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It supported the convening of an international conference to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

42. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) said that desertification or land degradation was a development problem which caused poverty among thousands of people throughout the world. Economic and social problems such as food security, water resources and migration were closely related to land degradation. Although people wanted to live in a healthy environment while using the natural resources in a rational manner, extreme poverty had forced them to put in place survival strategies that were harmful to potential natural resources. In that regard, pursuant to article 18 of the United Nations Convention on Desertification, appropriate means should be made available to grass-roots communities to combat desertification, including through the ownership of endogenous know-how.

43. Her delegation welcomed the decision by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its sixth session to make GEF the financial mechanism of the Convention. While her delegation welcomed the fact that 37 per cent of the GEF budget for 2003-2005 of $500 million would be spent on sustainable land development and human and institutional capacity-building, and that the other 63 per cent would be used for implementing innovative and local sustainable land management policies, it believed that much more needed to be done to mobilize resources for soil and water resources conservation projects and activities.

44. She urged all the development partners, as well as agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations

and the Bretton Woods institutions to integrate the Convention on Desertification in their poverty reduction strategies in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. She also reiterated the appeal to the private sector and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to provide greater financial resources to the countries most affected by desertification.

45. **Mr. Empole Losoko Efambe** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, while it was gratifying to note that many countries had acceded to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and had ratified the Kyoto Protocol, much still remained to be done. Greater international cooperation on the basis of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was required. In that regard, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should be enlarged to include all States Members of the United Nations. International cooperation in the area of environmental protection should focus on the development and dissemination of innovative technologies, economic diversification and the strengthening of regional, national and local sustainable development bodies, since that would help developing countries to better cope with the problems created by climate change. The countries of the North had a moral responsibility to provide financial and scientific assistance to the countries of the South in developing effective and appropriate national sustainable development strategies for key sectors, especially education, which would heighten public awareness of the problem of biological diversity and the conservation of ecosystems.

46. Referring to his country's seven national parks, four of which had been declared world heritage sites, he reiterated his Government's call for the establishment of a United Nations fund to make reparations for the destruction wrought by the long war. Noting that 50 per cent of Africa's fresh water resources were in his country, which also had the largest expanse of tropical forests in Africa, accounting for 6 per cent of world tropical forest reserves and 12.5 per cent of the world's tropical rain forests, he said that the financing by the international community of local and national poverty reduction projects for the indigenous populations who were making enormous sacrifices to preserve and protect those forests for the benefit of mankind would be a just recompense. His delegation supported the financing of studies aimed at the prevention of disasters and urged the international community to support the GEF Fund, the Fund for the Least Developed Countries and the Least Developed Countries Trust Fund for Climate Change, which was unfortunately not yet operational.

47. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that land degradation, deforestation and desertification affected a third of the earth's surface area and nearly 900 million people, most of whom lived in the poorest countries, especially in Africa. As a result of repeated droughts and human activities, his country's natural resources were deteriorating rapidly. Accordingly, measures had been taken by both the public and private sectors with a view to the preservation of the environment and development. Combating desertification, sustainable forestry resource management and environmental preservation were top priorities for his Government. The objectives of the country's national plan of action to combat desertification included the sustainable and integrated management of resources to promote food security, improving the economic environment with a view to eliminating poverty and enhancing knowledge of desertification by monitoring and evaluating the effects of drought. Civil society, including non-governmental organizations and environmental associations, were heavily involved in operations on the ground. Burkina Faso participated actively in several regional initiatives to combat desertification and was a member of various regional institutions, including the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

48. The international community must give higher priority to efforts to combat desertification by actively supporting the implementation of the Convention on Desertification and providing assistance in the area of capacity-building and financial assistance to seriously affected countries, especially African countries. He welcomed the financial support provided by GEF for activities to combat desertification, deforestation and land degradation and urged the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention on Desertification to continue their cooperation, since such cooperation promoted synergies for mobilizing resources in support of the goals of the three conventions. The establishment of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention on Desertification as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties was vital to the regular

monitoring of the implementation of the Convention. Lastly, he welcomed the recommendation of the UNEP Governing Council that the General Assembly should consider declaring an international year of deserts and desertification as soon as possible.

49. **Mr. Ito** (Japan) said that the international community must take action if the provisions of Agenda 21 were to become a reality. Noting that the Johannesburg Summit was an important milestone from that viewpoint, he said that Japan had taken a number of concrete actions, including the hosting of the third World Water Forum in Kyoto. Disaster was the biggest enemy of sustainable development. Although earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and storms continued to cause enormous damage to people and the environment in every corner of the globe, each country had a wealth of knowledge — indigenous, traditional or modern — to combat natural disasters. Japan had learned terrible lessons from its many experiences with natural disasters, including earthquakes, typhoons and volcanic eruptions. All Governments must share such collective wisdom in order to build a safer world; however, they should first include those lessons learned in their development strategy. The General Assembly should adopt a resolution allowing the United Nations to hold a world conference on disaster reduction to conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy, upgrade it to reflect fully the guiding principles of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and identify specific policy measures to put it into effect. Japan would like to host such a conference in Kobe, Hyogo, from 18 to 22 January 2005. The conference would afford the international community an opportunity to listen to the people of Hyogo, who had experienced a severe disaster and had struggled to rebuild their lives and their city.

50. Referring to climate change, he strongly urged Member States to conclude the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible, as a significant first step towards strengthening international actions to combat climate change. Noting that global participation in reducing greenhouse gas emissions was of vital importance in achieving the ultimate goal of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and ensuring the effectiveness of action against climate change, he said that a set of common rules must be established to govern the participation of all countries in that endeavour. In that connection, it was extremely important to build confidence between developed and developing countries. The early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and concrete measures by the developed countries to fulfil their commitments would definitely enhance such confidence. Moreover, concrete actions had already been taken by developing countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Japan, for its part, would continue to support such efforts through activities such as Clean Development Mechanism projects and capacity-building. Lastly, on the issue of financing conference services for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which the budget proposal had made no provision, his delegation agreed that the United Nations should make a continuing commitment to provide such services to the Framework Convention within the context of their institutional linkage.

51. **Mr. Singh** (Observer for the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)) said that participants at the recently concluded Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, had drafted a message to the upcoming Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The message stressed the importance of protected areas for sustainable development and poverty eradication. It urged Parties to the Convention to make a strong political commitment to achieving the World Summit on Sustainable Development goal of a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, including by identifying and filling in existing gaps in global protected areas using systems based on sound science; establishing mechanisms to ensure equal participation and sharing of the benefits of protected areas, particularly among indigenous peoples and local communities; and creating the appropriate enabling environment involving institutional and human resources as well as legal frameworks to manage protected areas.

52. Furthermore, IUCN, through its partnership with UNEP, had produced the new United Nations List of Protected Areas, which offered the first comprehensive review of the global protected area estate since 1997. The Congress had also adopted the Durban Accord and the Durban Action Plan. Technical workshops during the Congress had developed a number of specific recommendations reflecting the importance of engaging with the broad range of people who influenced or were influenced by protected areas; the recognition that protected areas provided a number of

valuable ecosystem services; and the importance of providing practical tools, guidelines and training for protected area decision makers and managers. One recommendation had endorsed the establishment of a representative network of mountain protected areas as a vital step towards sustainable mountain development.

53. **Mr. Shin** Boo Nam (Republic of Korea), noting that environmental degradation was one of the most serious challenges to efforts to raise standards of living around the world through economic and social development, said it was encouraging to note that, since the World Summit on Sustainable Development, many activities had been undertaken to implement the commitments of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation at the national, regional and global levels. Indeed, increasing the use of new and renewable sources of energy would increase access to modern energy services for the poor, helping to meet rising energy demands, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, eliminate pollutant emissions from fossil fuel use and replace depleted fossil fuel resources. While his delegation welcomed international efforts to increase the use of new and renewable energy sources, including the 23 partnership initiatives for sustainable development launched at the Johannesburg Summit, there were limitations to the use of such forms of energy. They included the higher prices of renewable energy relative to fossil fuel energy, the lack of information and knowledge about new and renewable sources of energy, the enormous expense of developing the relevant technologies and facilities, and the difficulty of marketing such technologies.

54. Those problems should be solved by adjusting the energy price structure and internalizing the social costs generated from emissions of air pollutants in accordance with the use of fossil fuel energy, establishing a mechanism for the exchange of information and knowledge through international cooperation, sharing the investment burden through the expansion of public-private joint projects and providing finance and tax incentives for relevant technology and facility development.

55. In his delegation's view, the current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption whereby 15 per cent of the world population accounted for 56 per cent of the world's total consumption, while the poorest 40 per cent accounted for only 11 per cent of consumption, should be changed in order to achieve sustainable development worldwide. In that regard, his Government would host in Seoul from 6 to 7 November 2003 the Asia-Pacific Regional Expert Meeting on a Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production. As far as efforts to ensure environmental preservation and sustainable development were concerned, his Government had recently deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of ratification of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. It was currently undertaking preparatory procedures for the ratification of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

56. **Mr. Toscano** (Switzerland) said that social and economic development should be promoted simultaneously with environmental protection in the pursuit of sustainable development.

57. Climate change induced by human activity posed a serious threat to current and future generations everywhere. Switzerland attached great importance to international cooperation in the fight against climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In 2001, even before ratifying the Kyoto Protocol in 2003, his Government had enacted legislation to reduce domestic emissions of greenhouse gases by 10 per cent by 2010. Through its domestic policy and international initiatives on energy, Switzerland fully supported the goals and principles of the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the promotion of renewable sources of energy to eliminate greenhouse gases and pollutants. He invited industrialized countries which had not yet done so to ratify the Protocol and adopt the appropriate measures to reduce emissions.

58. The results achieved under the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction had been encouraging, and he welcomed efforts to raise the profile of the secretariat of the Strategy in its work on risk management. Collaboration with UNDP and other organizations or global initiatives in disaster reduction had been strengthened through various instruments, and it was hoped that guidelines on the establishment of national platforms would be finalized for their early implementation in the field.

59. Switzerland attached great importance to lessons learned and shared the concern about the growing number of disasters associated with extreme weather events. It was crucial for the international community

to strengthen cooperation in dealing with the causes of such hazards.

60. While progress had been made in the area of biological diversity, ecosystems worldwide continued to be degraded at an accelerated pace. The preservation of biological diversity was a prerequisite for sustainable development and, as such, one of the greatest challenges of modern times. His delegation therefore attached priority to the elaboration of an action plan, within the Convention on Biological Diversity, to curb the loss of biological diversity by 2010. Switzerland also looked forward to the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety which would contribute to the ecologically sound management of biotechnology and to the protection of biological diversity worldwide. His Government would follow with great interest the negotiations, mentioned in paragraph 75 (c) of document A/58/191, on an international regime to promote access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of those resources.

61. His delegation was pleased that the sustainable development of mountain regions had been included on the agenda of the Committee, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/245, and welcomed the broad support for the International Year of Mountains, 2002. In that context, the launching of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions offered encouraging prospects. The recent meeting of the members of the Partnership had again demonstrated their will to develop an innovative, transparent, flexible and participatory relationship. Switzerland believed that the sustainable development of mountain regions should remain a current item even beyond the commemoration of the International Year, and hoped that the current session of the General Assembly would adopt a resolution to that effect.

62. **Mr. Di Leva** (World Bank) said that Bank sources had shown that, despite progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, development assistance was at its lowest level. Rich countries spent $300 billion a year on agricultural subsidies, $600 billion on defence, but only $56 billion on aid.

63. Ensuring environmental sustainability would require universal support for global environmental conventions. He outlined the World Bank's intention to substantially increase both its environmental lending portfolio and its portfolio pertaining to water, sanitation and flood prevention over the next fiscal year. Overall, the Bank's active portfolio of projects with major environmental components was expected to reach over $13 billion.

64. Through mainstreaming of environmental concerns into the Bank's operations, a full range of projects had achieved the objectives of the global environmental conventions, whether they were specifically tied to a convention or more broadly applicable to the environment as a whole. In that context, three major strategy papers for water, forests and rural development had been endorsed, signalling the Bank's commitment to increase funding for environmental protection and sustainable development.

65. He further described other collaborative efforts undertaken by the Bank to address new GEF focal areas, combat global warming and climate change, and support the Convention on Biological Diversity.

66. The World Bank was currently the single largest international funding source for projects on biological diversity, and had sought to focus on the role of biodiversity and livelihoods. It had also expanded the linkage between forests and biodiversity protection and carbon sequestration, providing a major meeting ground for biodiversity and climate regimes. The relationship between biodiversity protection and the emerging forms of biotechnology was also a growing segment of the Bank's work.

67. By 2025 half of the world's population would live under severe water stress. Since the 1950s, the World Bank had used its good offices to mediate water disputes, and had continued working among riparian Governments to address transboundary issues. He noted that many developing countries had made progressive efforts to reform their laws and policies relating to water in order to enhance sustainability and to improve water supply and sanitation.

68. It had been estimated that several hundred multilateral environmental agreements were in operation. While not all of them had their own financial mechanisms, the Bank, GEF and other partners sought to support them. Since its inception, the World Bank had been committed to supporting the aspirations of member States as reflected in their support for the global conventions.

69. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the members of the Andean Community, said that although its member States were among the countries with the most biologically diverse flora and fauna, a number of factors, motivated primarily by poverty, threatened their status as a global "epicentre" of biodiversity.

70. Since 1999, the Andean Community had initiated a process of cooperation to promote the use of biological diversity for social and economic development, based on sustainable criteria, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank. Detailing the results of the process, he described the Regional Strategy on Biodiversity, adopted by the Andean Council of Foreign Ministers, and a memorandum of understanding between the Andean Community and a Washington-based non-governmental organization.

71. Turning to disaster reduction, he noted that developing countries were predominantly affected by the growing incidence of natural disasters. Poverty increased the vulnerability of population groups and exposed them to risks and natural hazards. The need to survive often led to overexploitation of natural resources, which in turn resulted in environmental degradation. Moreover, while material damage caused by natural disasters limited economic development opportunities, their social consequences had created even greater social imbalances. Facing more frequent and intense natural disasters, compounded by the effects of climate change, societies were becoming less capable of withstanding the environmental, social and economic impact of natural disasters. With the occurrence of phenomena such as El Niño, which directly affected the countries of the Andean region, it was necessary to consider an integrated, comprehensive strategy for humanitarian assistance and disaster response which also contemplated action designed to mitigate the causes.

72. The members of the Andean Community had established the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance to promote risk reduction, rehabilitation and reconstruction, and information exchange. Within the context of risk management, it was particularly important to incorporate the transborder aspect of natural disasters, and to formulate responses which were subregional, regional and international in scope. The objectives of effective disaster reduction and response mechanisms could be attained only through international cooperation in technical, scientific and financial areas, as established under the Johannesburg Plan of Action. The Andean Community expressed its wholehearted support for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, scheduled for 2005, which would present a unique opportunity to advance the definition of instruments and specific measures to fulfil the objectives established at Johannesburg.

73. **Mr. Duijsens** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), focusing on risk and disaster reduction as a condition for sustainable development, presented a number of facts, including statistical data, on the changing nature of disasters and their impact on society. Irrespective of the form in which disasters occurred, they all represented setbacks to the development of countries, communities and individuals. Poor infrastructural planning, environmental degradation and disease increased potential risks in many areas.

74. The conventional view that disasters were temporary interruptions on the path to social and economic development, to be dealt with through humanitarian relief, was no longer credible. Rather, investments in development should be protected against the risk of disaster. Strengthening the resilience of communities and mitigating the effects of disasters was first and foremost a task for each Government, but effective cooperation by a broad range of actors was also required. As independent auxiliaries to public authorities, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies played a critical role linking Governments to civil society.

75. The Federation wished to urge Governments to take a long-term perspective and integrated approach to disasters, to ensure that geopolitical factors did not determine the risk reduction agenda, and to support the International Disaster Response Law project. The project sought to identify and compile the laws, principles and practices relating to international disaster response. Improving awareness and implementation of existing disaster response law could ensure that lives could be saved and dignity restored quickly and efficiently.

76. The importance that the Federation attached to disaster preparedness would be further demonstrated at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which was expected to bring together

high-level representatives of the Federation with the States parties to the Geneva Conventions. The Federation strongly believed that, considering the apparent likelihood of increased incidence of extreme weather events, continued population growth, urbanization, and prevalence of infectious disease, the international community could respond effectively to the challenge and reverse the trend of disaster and suffering.

77. **Ms. Al-Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that, in spite of numerous major international conferences on environment and development, human activity continued to damage the environment, with considerable impact on the lives of millions of people. National, regional and international strategies for the implementation of conference recommendations could help to establish new practices which guaranteed protection of ecological systems and efficient management of natural resources.

78. The Government of the United Arab Emirates had introduced a comprehensive national strategy to enact new by-laws and regulations to enhance environmental protection and to develop social, cultural and economic activities. A number of programmes in favour of rural development and forestry had been launched, despite the difficulties posed by the scarcity of water and severe weather conditions. Those projects had also focused on raising public awareness in the areas of agriculture, food production and environmental conservation. Research on the protection of endangered species had been supported by the Government, which had also introduced legislation on the protection of the marine environment.

79. Convinced of the universal desire to resolve environmental threats, the United Arab Emirates would continue to cooperate with regional and international organizations engaged in activities to improve the environment. Her Government called for enhanced assistance to developing and post-conflict countries to enable them to carry out necessary reforms in their environmental and economic institutions, and to address related social issues.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.